



**Health Council of Canada  
Council Meeting  
Ottawa, Ontario  
February 22, 23, 2010**

February 22 (1 p.m.)



Richard Alvarez, CEO and President of Canada Health Infoway, addressed the Health Council of Canada on the importance of staying the course on eHealth in the transformation of Canada's health care system.

"While [eHealth] is not the be-all and end-all, it is an enabler" of this health care renewal, said Mr. Alvarez.

First and foremost, he told Councillors, it is about "getting the right information to the right individuals at the right time."

Mr. Alvarez laid out Canada Health Infoway's call to action:

- By 2010, every province and territory will benefit from new EHR systems that will modernize their health care.
- By 2010, 50%, and by 2016, 100%, of Canadians will have an electronic health record.

However, he indicated that to reach these goals, governments will need to provide adequate funding and there will need to be improved clinician uptake of these technologies.

Mr. Alvarez then highlighted some examples of best practices and innovations in eHealth from across Canada, among them:

- British Columbia's drug information system – PharmaNet – captures every prescription in the province's pharmacies and alerts pharmacists, emergency rooms and certain physicians.
- In Nova Scotia, nearly all x-ray images are digital and can be accessed electronically by authorized health providers anywhere, anytime.

Overall, Canada Health Infoway had approved funding for 294 projects across Canada as of September 30, 2009.



Mr. Alvarez likened the implementation of electronic health records to changes in the Canadian banking system. The first bank branch went online in 1967, but online banking wasn't offered until thirty years later. He emphasized the need to stay the course on eHealth, despite what is sometimes perceived as slow progress. "This stuff is going to take a while," he said.

February 22 (3:30 p.m.)



Lynne Slotek, CEO of the Institute of Wellbeing, presented a new approach to measuring societal progress: The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW).

"Traditional statistical measures, like GDP, don't capture the phenomena which have an increasing impact on the wellbeing of Canadians," Ms. Slotek told Councillors.

The CIW was launched in June, 2009, with reports on Healthy Populations, Living Standards and Community Vitality. By November 2010, reports will also have been released on: Democratic Engagement; Time Use; Arts, Culture and Recreation; Education; and Environment, culminating in the issue of the first composite index number reflecting Canadians' wellbeing.

Ms. Slotek outlined the reasons for the CIW:

- Promote a shared vision of what really constitutes sustainable wellbeing and the elements that contribute to or detract from it;
- Measure national progress toward, or away from, achieving that vision;
- Stimulate discussion about the types of policies, programs, and activities that will move us closer and faster toward achieving wellbeing;
- Give Canadians tools to promote wellbeing with policy and decision makers, so as to account for why things are getting better or worse; and
- Add momentum to the global movement for a more holistic way of measuring societal progress.

When looking towards the future, Ms. Slotek told Councillors that wellbeing can be improved through sound public policy. Ultimately, Ms. Slotek hopes that the index is taken up as a standard reporting mechanism on the wellbeing of Canadians, just as we now report on the GDP and unemployment.